

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY 2727
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI UAE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY AMMAN JORDAN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CAIRO EGYPT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DOHA QATAR PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY JIDDA SAUDI ARABIA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM SUDAN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT KUWAIT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT OMAN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SANA YEMEN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IRAN PRIORITY
SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
CNO WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK PRIORITY
COMIDEASTFOR PRIORITY

S E C R E T MANAMA 076

E.O. 11652 : GDS

TAGS : MARR, BA

SUBJECT : REGIONAL SUPPORT FOR MIDEASTFOR

REFERENCE : STATE 017267

1. WE BELIEVE ADDRESSEES REFTEL ARE GENERALLY AWARE OF GOB'S
STATED POSITION ON THE SORT OF REGIONAL SUPPORT FOR MIDDLE
EAST FORCE WHICH MIGHT PERSUADE BAHRAIN TO RECONSIDER ITS
DECISION ON MID-1977 TERMINATION OF U.S. NAVY PRESENCE HERE,
BUT FOLLOWING CLARIFICATION MIGHT BE HELPFUL IN PREPARING
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RESPONSES TO REFTEL.

2. ESSENTIALLY, GOB CLAIMS TO BE LOOKING FOR PUBLIC RATHER THAN PRIVATE EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT AND IS LOOKING PRIMARILY TO SAUDI ARABIA BUT ALSO TO IRAN FOR THIS SORT OF PUBLIC STAND. FOREIGN MINISTER HAS FREQUENTLY SPOKEN PRIVATELY WITH CONSIDERABLE BITTERNESS ABOUT TENDENCY OF GULF NEIGHBORS, NOTABLY SAUDI ARABIA, TO "WHISPER WORDS OF PRIVATE SUPPORT FOR U.S. NAVY PRESENCE TO BAHRAIN SHAIKHS BEHIND THE LOCKED DOORS OF PALACES" WHILE REFUSING TO TAKE A PUBLIC STAND IN SUPPORT OF U.S. NAVY PRESENCE.

3. WITH POLITICAL SITUATION HERE FROZEN AS RESULT OF DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT, GOB HAS IN EFFECT LOCKED ITSELF IN ON THIS ISSUE IN THAT IT HAS OVERWHELMING EVIDENCE ON BASIS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MOVES AGAINST MIDDLE EAST FORCE PRESENCE PRIOR TO ASSEMBLY'S DISSOLUTION THAT BAHRAIN "PUBLIC OPINION" STRONGLY OPPOSES NAVY PRESENCE. KEY GOB MINISTERS CONTEND THAT, IN TERMS OF BAHRAIN'S OWN NATIONAL INTEREST, THE CASE FOR CONTINUING THE U.S. NAVY PRESENCE IS SIMPLY TOO NUANCED TO BE PERSUASIVE IN THE FACE OF LONG-CHERISHED NATIONALIST SLOGANS OPPOSING IT. AS A RESULT OF ITS DISSOLVING THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, THE GOVERNMENT IS LEANING OVER BACKWARDS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT ITS POLICY FAITHFULLY REPRESENTS PUBLIC OPINION. HENCE IT CLAIMS TO US NOT TO FEEL IN POSITION TO BUCK PUBLIC OPINION ON THIS ISSUE SO LONG AS MIDDLE EAST FORCE HAS LOCAL IMAGE AS A "BAHRAIN NAVY" WHOSE PRESENCE IN GULF ENJOYS NO PUBLIC SUPPORT FROM OTHER GULF COUNTRIES.

4. WE INTERPRET GOB'S POSITION TO BE UNCHANGEABLE UNLESS IT CAN PRODUCE PUBLICLY EVIDENCE THAT BAHRAIN'S NEIGHBORS HAVE URGED GOB TO CONTINUE NAVY PRESENCE AND THUS CLAIM IT PREPARED TO DO SO NOT ON THE BASIS OF ITS RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. BUT THROUGH ITS DESIRE TO ACCOMMODATE OTHER GULF STATES IN THEIR MUTUAL QUEST FOR SECURITY AND STABILITY IN THE REGION.

5. GIVEN THIS SITUATION, OUR GUESS IS THAT THE MINIMUM GOB FEELS IT NEEDS IS: (A) A STRONG PUBLIC SAUDI ENDORSEMENT OF CONTINUED MIDDLE EAST FORCE PRESENCE IN THE GULF OPERATING OUT OF BAHRAIN; (B) A STRONG PRIVATE IRANIAN ENDORSEMENT COUPLED
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WITH A SUFFICIENTLY PUBLICIZED AND UNAMBIGUOUS STATEMENT BY THE SHAH BLESSING AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING THE CONTINUED U.S. NAVY PRESENCE; (C) CONTINUED EGYPTIAN ACQUIESCENCE, PRIVATELY EXPRESSED, IN MIDDLE EAST FORCE PRESENCE AND (D) A PRIVATE ASSURANCE BY KUWAIT THAT IT IS NOT ACTIVELY OPPOSED TO PRESENCE COUPLED WITH A GOOD KUWAITI EFFORT TO MUTE PRESS AND PARLIAMENTARY ATTACKS ON BAHRAIN'S CONTINUED HOSPITALITY TO MIDDLE EAST FORCE. WHILE SOME SORT OF PUBLIC STATEMENT EMANATING FROM A JOINT

MEETING OF ALL THE GULF STATES WOULD BE THE BEST OF ALL POSSIBLE
WORLDS FROM GOB'S PERSPECTIVE, WE DO NOT FEEL ACTIVE SUPPORT
OF SMALLER REGIONAL STATES SUCH AS UAE, QATAR, OMAN AND YEMEN
IS ESSENTIAL SO LONG AS CONDITIONS NOTED ABOVE ARE MET. IN
VIEW OF THE DEEP RESPECT IN WHICH HE IS HELD BY BAHRAIN'S
RULERS, AN ENCOURAGING PRIVATE WORD FROM KING HUSSEIN RE NAVY
PRESENCE WOULD ALWAYS BE HELPFUL, BUT IN OUR VIEW NOT A
DETERMINING, FACTOR.

TWINAM

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